

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

**FOREST SITE PREPARATION**

(Acre)  
Code 490

**DEFINITION**

Treating areas to encourage natural regeneration of desirable trees and shrubs or to permit artificial regeneration by planting or direct seeding.

**PURPOSE**

To prepare land for establishing a stand of desirable woody vegetation by controlling undesirable vegetation, removing slash and debris, or altering site conditions.

**CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES**

In understocked areas, in areas where a land cover change to forest is desired, or in areas having undesirable vegetation that inhibits or competes with preferred woody species.

**CRITERIA**

The method, intensity and timing of site preparation will match the limitations of the site, safety, and equipment and the requirements of the regeneration species.

An appropriate site preparation method will be chosen to protect any desirable vegetation in understocked areas. Methods could include other practices such as terracing, land clearing and smoothing, brush management, conservation tillage, contour farming and vegetative barriers.

Remaining slash and debris shall not create habitat for or harbor harmful levels of pests.

Remaining slash and debris shall not hinder needed equipment operations or create undue fire hazard.

Accelerated erosion and/or runoff from site preparation will be controlled by supporting practices.

Comply with applicable laws and regulations, including the state's Best Management Practices (BMPs).

**CONSIDERATIONS**

The chosen method should be cost effective and protect cultural resources, wildlife habitat, springs, seeps, wetlands and other unique areas.

**PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS**

Specifications for applying this practice shall be prepared for each site and recorded using approved specification sheets, job sheets, and narrative statements in the conservation plan, or other acceptable documentation.

Plans and specifications will address species; method of preparation; and protection required for seed, seedlings, or cuttings; and protection of the site.

**GENERAL SPECIFICATIONS**

Planting must be done preferably during the rainy season. Do not plant trees over or beside underground sewage, water lines and electrical utilities. Plant trees 4 feet from fences unless used as living fences or in agroforestry systems.

Ball and burlap means that the plant was grown in the ground at the nursery. If this happens the ball must be wrapped in burlap or some other material.

Do not plant trees that have scrapes on the bark.

Keep roots of planting stock moist at all times before planting. Always pick up the trees by the container or root ball, never by the trunk.

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service.
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Trees that are in situ must be carefully treated and maintained as the rest of the trees that will be planted. Trees must be oriented from east to west to allow better sunlight penetration.

Planting distance may differ for each specie. Follow planting distances in the Puerto Rico Guide for Reforestation and the U. S. Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture guides. As a general rule, the planting distance will be equivalent to the tree canopy. For dense forests, trees should be planted closer.

Dig a planting hole to give plenty of room for the roots. The hole should be 2 feet wider than the root ball, and have the same depth. If container grown remove the tree from the container, be sure not to disturb the root ball, cut away any nylon, wire or any other synthetic burlap to prevent girdling.

Leaves and any other trash must be kept out of the hole. Place the tree in the hole at the same depth it grew in the container. Make sure the trunk is straight. If bareroot stock is used, straighten the roots so that they will grow in a normal pattern. Completely bury all burlap materials. Exposed material will act as a wick drawing water out of the planting hole.

Begin refilling the remnant space in the hole with the same soil removed from the hole. Settle soil by watering as you fill the hole to eliminate air pockets. Do not place soil on top of root ball. Stamp earth firmly about the root zone.

Mound soil 6 inches high, 2 feet out from the trunk to form a ring or basin to hold water. This will keep the water where it is needed instead of running off the surface.

Placing a 3-inch layer of mulch around each tree will prevent water loss. Mulch should extend 2 feet from the trunk of the planted tree. Stake new-planted trees only if needed. Some pruning may be needed at time of planting to remove dead or damaged branches, crossed or rubbing branches, narrow or V-shaped crotches, multiple main stems, or sucker branches or water sprouts near the base of the trunk.

Prune with a saw or pruning shears, not with an ax. Cut close to trunk, but avoid cutting deeply into the bark.

Watering each tree heavily at planting and once every two weeks, if it is not raining, is advisable. Keep watering during the next 6 months after planting if necessary. Pesticides must be applied following label directions.

Apply chemicals during periods of minimum potential for drift.

## **OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE**

Operation and maintenance requirements are not applicable for this practice.